

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6312
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 0703

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: GY, PEPR
SUBJECT: BURNHAM'S ATTITUDES RE USSR AND US

1. USUALLY RELIABLE EMBASSY SOURCE WHO MET WITH PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM LAST WEEKEND TOLD CHARGE THAT BURNHAM EXPRESSED DISTASTE FOR THE SOVIET UNION, AND WAS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL OF THE SOVIET BRAND OF SOCIALISM WITH ITS RIGID POLITICAL CONTROLS. HE ALSO SAID THAT BURNHAM DID NOT EXPECT THE SOVIET UNION TO PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO GUYANA.

2. SOURCE SAID THAT BURNHAM INTENDED TO SPEAK BLUNTLY TO THE SOVIETS DURING HIS TRIP TO MOSCOW THIS YEAR ABOUT THEIR FAILURE TO PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE; HOWEVER, HE WANTED TO VISIT THE US FIRST AND TALK TO PRESIDENT CARTER TO ASCERTAIN DIRECTLY AND CLEARLY THE OVERALL US ATTITUDE TOWARD GUYANA. HE WAS AFRAID TO BE TOO ROUGH ON THE SOVIETS OR BREAK COMMUNICATION WITH THEM BECAUSE HE FEARED THAT IF THE US PERCEIVED THAT HE HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN, IT WOULD "PUT THE SQUEEZE" ON HIM IN AN EFFORT
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TO INFLUENCE HIM AND REDUCE GUYANA'S INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION. THE SOURCE RECEIVED THE IMPRESSION THAT THE EXTENT TO WHICH BURNHAM WILL DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM MOSCOW WILL DEPEND, IN INVERSE PROPORTION, UPON THE EXTENT OF CONFIDENCE HE HAS IN THE US.

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS HEARD SEVERAL REPORTS THAT

BURNHAM IS FED UP WITH THE SOVIETS DUE TO THEIR CLAIM OF "A LACK OF HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY" TO HELP EX-COLONIAL NATIONS AND MORE IMPORTANTLY FOR THEIR CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR OPPOSITION EADER CHEDDI JAGAN. CONVERSELY, BURNHAM'S LINGERING SUSPICIONS OF THE US ARE CHARACTERISTIC OF HIM ALSO. HE APPARENTLY STILL IS NOT FULLY CONVINCED OF THE US ACCEPTANCE OF IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM.

4. ALTHOUGH BURNHAM BELIEVES IN SOCIALISM AS A STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT, TO DATE HE HAS FOLLOWED A PRAGMATIC APPROACH WHICH THE SOVIET UNION COULD NOT ENDORSE. HE HAS USED SOCIALISM AS A MEANS OF ORGANIZING AND RETAINING POLITICAL SUPPORT AND POWER. ALSO HIS NON-ALIGNED STANCE IN FAVOR OF THE SOVIET UNION OF TWO YEARS AGO HAD CERTAIN PRACTICAL GOALS WHICH WERE NOT ACHIEVED. HENCE THE REPORTS OF BURNHAM'S DISILLUSIONMENT WITH SOCIALISM MAY SIMPLY BE HIS RESPONSE TO A GROWING REALIZATION THAT SOCIALISM AS A GAMBIT FOR GUARANTEEING POPULAR POLITICAL SUPPORT HAS NOT PAID OFF. BURNHAM'S PRIDE AND THE POLITICAL RISK OF OPENLY ADMITTING PREVIOUS ERROR ALONG WITH UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SIGNIFICANT US SUPPORT MAY NOW BE THE PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATIONS PREVENTING HIM FROM MAKING A SHARP DEPARTURE FROM PAST POLICIES. BURNHAM'S DILEMMA AT THE MOMENT APPEARS LIKE THAT OF A STUNT RIDER IN A CIRCUS WHO HAS HIS FEET ON THE BACKS OF TWO HORSES AND IS AFRAID TO SHIFT ALL HIS
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WEIGHT TO ONE HORSE FOR FEAR OF FALLING BETWEEN THE TWO HORSES. THIS MIGHT BE THE MOMENT AT WHICH THE US SHOULD CONSIDER PROVIDING BURNHAM WITH ENCOURAGEMENT OR A SPECIAL INDUCEMENT TO MOVE CLOSER TOWARD MODERATION.
BLACKEN

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